

Message Text

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FM AMEMBASSY VIENNA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1835

UNCLAS VIENNA 4212

FOR DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION/J. HERZ

EO 11652: NA

TAGS: PGOV, ETRN, AU

SUBJECT: TRANSPORT MINISTRY ORGANIZATION

REF: STATE 104263

1. AUSTRIAN MINISTRY OF TRANSPORT WILL BE REPRESENTED AT ECMT MEETING BY ERWIN LANC (PRONOUNCED LAHNZ), FEDERAL MINISTER OF TRANSPORT; DR. KARL HALBMAYER, DIRECTOR OF DEPARTMENT FOR COORDINATION OF TRANSPORT POLICY AND DEPUTY TO THE MINISTER; DR. HERBERT METZNER, DIRECTOR OF SECTION 4, ROAD TRANSPORT; DR. WALTER KNAPPL, DIRECTOR OF THE DEPARTMENT OF INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS; AND DR. KARL HOLLESCHEK, PRIVATE SECRETARY TO MINISTER.

2. BECAUSE OF AUSTRIA'S GEOGRAPHICAL POSITION AT LAND-LOCKED COUNTRY IN THE CENTER OF EUROPE, COUNTRY'S TRANSPORTATION SITUATION IS CLOSELY TIED TO ITS FUNCTIONS AS A TRADITIONAL CROSSROAD BETWEEN EASTERN AND WESTERN AND NORTHERN AND SOUTHERN EUROPE AND THE MIDDLE EAST. AUSTRIA'S CONTRIBUTION TO THE JUNE MEETING OF ECMT WILL BE A PRESENTATION OF ITS POSITION IN THIS REGARD, WITH MAIN EMPHASIS PLACED ON ROAD TRANSPORT. RAIL TRANSPORT WILL BE MAIN DISCUSSION SUBJECT
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FOR THE DECEMBER MEETING OF ECMT IN PARIS.

3. AUSTRIA HAS TWO ROAD PROGRESS CURRENTLY UNDER WAY. ONE IS THE CONSTRUCTION OF NEW HIGHWAYS FOR TRANSIT PURPOSES SUCH AS SO-CALLED "GUEST WORKERS ROUTE" FROM SALZBURG TO SPIELFELD ON YUGOSLAV FRONTIER, AND THE MAINTENANCE OF EXISTING ROUTES. MAIN PROBLEM IS

FINANCING FOR THESE PROJECTS: AUSTRIA IS NO LONGER ABLE TO FINANCE THEM FROM EXISTING RESOURCES. OTHER PROGRAM, CURRENTLY UNDER DISCUSSION, IS INTRODUCTION OF A TRANSIT TAX FOR VEHICLES CROSSING AUSTRIAN TERRITORY. INTRODUCTION OF SUCH A TAX WILL PROBABLY REQUIRE A FEDERAL LAW AND APPROVAL BY AUSTRIAN PARLIAMENT. A DECISION IS EXPECTED IN THE NEAR FUTURE.

4. AUSTRIAN FEDERAL RAILWAY COMPANY HAS EMBARKED ON A TEN YEAR (1976-1985) PROGRAM FOR THE MODERNIZATION AND RATIONALIZATION OF THE COUNTRY'S RAILWAY NETWORK. THIS INVOLVES, INTER ALIA, THE PURCHASE OF LOCOMOTIVES AND ALL TYPES OF ROLLING STOCK, INCLUDING FLAT-BED CARS FOR USE ON AUSTRIA'S SINGLE RAIL TRANSIT ROUTE, THE CONVERSION OF STEAM TO ELECTRIC AND DIESEL POWER, THE IMPROVEMENT AND EXPANSION OF RAILROAD TRACK AND THE MODERNIZATION OF THE RAILWAY SAFETY SYSTEM INCLUDING SIGNALING SYSTEM AND LEVEL-CROSSINGS. IMPLEMENTATION OF THIS MAJOR PROGRAM WILL DEPEND LARGELY ON CASH FLOWS FROM THE AUSTRIAN BUDGET, WHICH IS ALREADY INSUFFICIENT TO MEET IMMEDIATE NEEDS.

5. OTHER PROGRAMS CURRENTLY UNDER WAY ARE NOT SCHEDULED FOR DISCUSSION AT ECMT. MEEHAN

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